laws, nor does it remove regulatory authority from various agencies. It does not call for the repeal of mandatory conditions on a FERC issued license.

It is clear to me and many of my colleagues that hydropower is at risk and one of our most important tasks here in the Senate is to develop policies that lead to an energy strategy that will ensure an adequate supply of reasonably priced, reliable energy to all Americans in an environmentally responsible manner. The relicensing of non-federal hydropower can and should continue to be an important strategy.

In addition, we should work with our Western Hemisphere neighbors to help them increase their crude oil and natural gas production.

We should provide relief to consumers by eliminating the 4.3 cents a gallon tax on motor gasoline enacted in 1993.

We need to step away from punitive, command and control environmental regulations and move toward performance based regulatory concepts that offer the regulated community opportunities to find flexible approaches to reducing emissions of legally regulated contaminants.

We must carefully assess the capabilities of our energy production and delivery systems to find opportunities to improve system productivity, efficiency and reliability.

We must ensure that sufficient funds are available to help those with lower incomes to weatherize their homes and pay their energy bills.

While renewable energy sources provide only about 3 percent of total U.S. demand for energy, we should continue to provide incentives for our citizens to use wind, solar, and other renewables.

We should encourage motor vehicle manufacturers to ensure that consumers have access to safe and highly efficient cars and trucks.

We must realize that we are part of the problem. Our unwillingness to develop our own abundant oil, gas and coal resources dooms us to greater dependence on foreign sources, especially for crude oil. We must make the conscious choice to carefully find and develop our resources while protecting our environment.

I conclude by drawing attention to a portion of this bill that is increasingly valuable; that is the area of new technology. Some who will argue against this bill would suggest that it is merely a reason to fall back to our habits of old. That is not true. We want to and will continue to fund the new technology, much of it started in the decade of the 1990s. It is clearly important. We are not always going to have hydrocarbons around, and we should not be that dependent upon them. But in the short term, in the next several decades, as we are using our resources and fueling our economy, we need to look at nuclear technology and new clean coal technology so we can use the abundance of these resources and in an environmentally sound way.

In my State of Idaho, we are dependent on hydropower. There are many, including the past administration and many of their devotees, who would suggest the dams on those rivers that produce that clean source of energy, nonpolluting, nongreenhouse gas-emitting, that those dams ought to be breached. They insist that if the dams are not removed then they ought to be regulated in a much more stringent way. In fact, the licensing process the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has as a part of its responsibility to renew these hydro facilities is one that I am working on. And within this legislation is a reform of the licensing process, not to change it and take stakeholders or interested parties away from it, but to ask them to perform their responsibilities in a timely fashion and in a responsible fashion.

Why should it take 10 years to relicense a hydro facility and cost millions upon millions of dollars that ultimately the consumer has to pay? If it needs retrofitting, if it needs improvement of technology for environmental reasons, those are conclusions that can be drawn in a reasonably quick way, and managed responsibly, so that we can balance out our energy needs.

The legislation the Senate now has before us will be coupled with the work the Bush administration is doing now through their Cabinet level working group. This administration wants an energy policy, too, and it is their goal to produce one for the American people.

Our economy depends on an abundant supply of environmentally sound, relatively low-cost energy. It is the wealth of our country. It is what drives this marvelous economic engine of ours. And it does something very simple—it puts money in the pocketbook of the worker. It turns the lights on in his or her home. It helps educate our children. It does all of the wonderful things we in America have grown to expect.

Why should we suggest that we ought to have anything less if we can do it with the environment in mind and at a relatively low cost. That can be accomplished in a policy in which the Federal Government promotes the concept of energy production instead of setting up one trip wire after another to disallow it from happening.

I look forward to the coming debate. I think it is critical that all of us get ourselves involved and educated in the issues at hand.

These two pieces of legislation go a long way toward allowing that to happen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I compliment the Senator from Idaho on the points he was making. I look forward to joining him in tackling this very difficult problem of making some sense out of our national energy policy. Senator CRAIG has the expertise to lead us, along with Senator MURKOWSKI. I will be looking forward to joining them in that effort.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the subject of energy, the energy prospects we face as a nation, and the need to develop new energy policies here in this Congress. The United States is currently experiencing unusually high and volatile energy prices. We have seen that in my State of New Mexico, and I assume we have seen that in the State of Florida, where the Presiding Officer lives.

During most of the 1990s, in spite of robust economic growth and increased demand for energy, increased productivity, and reduction in energy use per dollar of gross domestic product, along with the introduction of market competition, all of those factors acted to hold down prices, but now we have finally exhausted the buffer of excess capacity that kept the system functioning with low prices and relatively minor bumps along the way. So that excess capacity is gone, and there are a number of factors and circumstances that have contributed to the current situation we face—the situation of inadequate supply, too much demand.

Remedies are not as apparent as some would argue. The Republican energy package, which was introduced today by my colleague, Senator MURKOWSKI, contains a number of provisions that I and many Democrats, I am sure, would be glad to support. In fact, many of those proposals are similar to, if not the same as, provisions originally introduced by Democrats in the last Congress. Much of what has been introduced today involves proposals to change the tax laws; and in some cases those proposals are meritorious; in other cases, they are not an adequate substitute for changes in actual energy policy.

Just last week, President Bush made a very strong statement about tax policy and his determination not to modify his income tax proposals with other unrelated tax measures. This bill that was introduced today, with over 180 pages of tax proposals, seems to reflect some disconnect between the administration's views on the subject of tax provisions directed or targeted at this particular industry and the views of some of my colleagues on the Republican side in the Senate.

I had hoped, and still hope, we can proceed on a bipartisan and collaborative basis to develop solutions to these critical problems. I strongly believe that a package with equal emphasis on both supply and demand measures, developed with bipartisan support, is the only way we can pass responsible energy legislation in this Congress. I hope we can proceed with the input of this new administration and with the input from the States and various stakeholders to develop such consensus legislation.

It is important to step back and look at the current context. The restructured electricity and natural gas markets of today pose very different public policy challenges from the old regulatory models. Ever-increasing consumer demand for transportation fuels, compounded by the recession in Asia and subsequent determination by OPEC to actively intervene in the market, has increased the volatility and high prices of oil and natural gas.

As the economic growth of recent years has used up the excess capacity in the fuels, power, and natural gas sectors, the frictions and imperfections in those markets have become very apparent.

The old model of split responsibility between States and the Federal Government is no longer adequate. We need new mechanisms and policies to address regional needs and circumstances. We need a new model for ensuring short-term and long-term energy demand and supply needs and managing weather-related and supply emergencies.

There are several regional energy boards and various planning commissions that could be reviewed as models for new legislation in this area. In consultation with the States, we need to determine how to ensure regional entities have adequate authority to do what is needed in those regions. We should evaluate whether an additional grant of authority from the Federal Government or a specific authorization of responsibility should be written into Federal statute.

I will speak for a moment about infrastructure needs. Electric transmission lines, natural gas and oil pipelines, powerplants, and refineries have all become increasingly difficult to site. The No. 1 problem is not environmental permitting, as some persistently argue in public debate today. As our society has become increasingly urbanized and congested, local communities have become increasingly active in opposing the siting of new infrastructure, and tax incentives do not address this major hurdle.

Certainly the environmental rules governing the permitting process could be streamlined to expedite processing and facilitate investments in new technologies not in the marketplace when the existing rules were written. We should consider the possibility of siting new infrastructure on existing rights-of-way or at Federal facilities or on brownfields.

We also need to evaluate whether incentives or different policies at the State or Federal level are necessary to ensure adequate investment in new capacity. Overemphasis on short-term and spot contracts compounded by ongoing uncertainty with respect to the future regulatory environment have had a stifling effect upon investment. We need to develop a consensus on policies that provide greater certainty and a mechanism to address the public's growing resistance to siting new facilities.

On the subject of supply diversity and efficiency, the counter to major new infrastructure projects is to emphasize increasing energy efficiency and development of smaller distributed generation. We need to enact national standards and policies for interconnection of distributed generation technologies to ensure diversity of fuels and technologies for the future. Commercial investment in new technologies and nonconventional fuels will require some degree of additional incentives. I introduced legislation in the last Congress to address these issues, and I am pleased to see similar provisions included in this Republican legislation today.

Increasing the efficient use of energy is the single most effective and least-cost policy for both the short term and the long term. Investments in more energy-efficient lighting, more energy-efficient appliances, and more energy-efficient buildings generate benefits in terms of energy savings, emission reductions, and human health improvements. Improvements to installation practices for heating and cooling systems, including duct work, could take considerable pressure off the power grid and off natural gas supplies in the coming months. Expediting the replacement of older appliances with newer high-efficiency models would not only reduce energy consumption, it would create new manufacturing jobs.

Projections of capacity constraints and high electricity prices in the New York urban area could be mitigated with a concerted effort to upgrade lighting, heating, and cooling systems in commercial buildings even before this summer is upon us. These improvements would immediately reduce pressure on the grid and save businesses money in the process.

The National Conference of Mayors, at its recent meeting here in Washington, called for an increase of 10 percent in the efficient use of energy.

Over the past decade or so, sales of sport utility vehicles and light trucks grew to become fully half the passenger vehicles sold in this country. Meanwhile, a moratorium on even studying increasing fuel efficiency was imposed by the Republican-controlled Congress in the last 2 years. I do not think we can even talk about a comprehensive energy policy without concrete policies to reduce oil demand. We cannot just produce our way to independence from foreign oil supplies.

I call my colleagues' attention to this chart. The chart is entitled: ''Petroleum Use Increases Mainly in the Transportation Sector.''

This is for the period 1970 to the year 2020, and it shows a history and then a projection for consumption in the transportation sector, consumption in the industrial sector, consumption in the residential-commercial sector, and finally consumption in the electricity generation activity.

The obvious conclusion one draws from this chart is that the growth consumption is in the transportation sector. That is the top line. That is because of the inefficiency of the vehicles we are driving more and more each year in this country. There can be no serious discussion about reducing our dependence on foreign oil without a discussion of what can be done to reverse these trends. I hope that is part of the debate we have over the next few months in this Chamber about our energy policy.

On the subject of supply, I do agree with my Republican colleagues on the need to increase the supply of petroleum products. The U.S. has domestic natural gas and oil resources that can be developed in an efficient and environmentally sensitive manner. In fact, under the previous administration, oil and natural gas production on Federal lands and in the Outer Continental Shelf increased substantially. Let me repeat that, Mr. President, because most people are not aware of that. In the previous administration, oil and natural gas production on Federal lands and on the Outer Continental Shelf increased substantially. Production on State and private lands did not keep pace with production on Federal lands.

Policies should first emphasize maximizing the recovery of resources currently open to development. The North Slope of Alaska in the vicinity of Prudhoe Bay is estimated to contain at least 32 and maybe as much as 38 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that is ready for development. Until now, producing and transporting the gas from the North Slope has not been economical. Producers are currently conducting a feasibility study for a pipeline to bring the gas to market in Canada and also in the lower 48. The U.S. Geological Survey has estimated that with additional exploration in the area, the potential resources could be double the current estimate which I have given of 32 to 38 trillion cubic feet.

Such a project will involve a number of Federal and State agencies, Native groups, the Government of Canada, and many private stakeholders in ensuring the efficient processing of all permitting and certifications necessary to be a top priority of this Congress. I have committed to Senator MURKOWSKI to work with him to facilitate any legislative actions that are appropriate to accomplish this.

Another producing area with great potential is the deep water Gulf of Mexico. The gulf has had an explosion of development in recent years, in part due to royalty incentives to offset the higher costs of developing a frontier area.

The Minerals Management Service is scheduled to hold a lease sale later this year for an area in the eastern planning area of the gulf. This chart shows what I am talking about. The green area is the sale 1881. The lease sale would cover a narrow strip of Federal waters directly south of the Alabama coastline which expands into a broader area 100 miles out in the gulf.

The MMS, the Minerals Management Service, estimates 240 million barrels of oil and 1.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas will be developed from this area. Those figures could go as high as 370 million barrels of oil and 3.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Unfortunately, the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, the President's brother, has written to the Department of the Interior urging cancellation of this lease sale and any future lease sales in this entire eastern planning region. I certainly understand that Floridians may have concerns about the development close to their beaches, but most of this area is more than 100 miles from the State and in Federal waters.

When the Minerals Management Service prepared the leasing plan for this 5-year-period, they had extensive public meetings and consultations with States. The State of Florida supported proceeding with this sale. This is not a wildlife refuge. It is a huge expanse of Federal water where industry has developed oil and gas for years and has developed it in a safe and environmentally sound manner. This is a sale which we should go forward with in order to meet the needs the country will have for additional supply in the future.

A serious, long-term commitment to research and development of the next generation of powerplants is essential. Such a program should include all feasible fuels and technologies, with an emphasis on a fleet of technologies to ensure fuel diversity while meeting energy supply and emission reduction targets. Development and deployment of more efficient generating and end-use technologies are critical.

Commitment to a coordinated research, development, and deployment program to ensure the safe and reliable operation of pipelines and transmission lines is also essential to restore public confidence in the safety of these systems. The Pipeline Safety Act, S. 235, which passed the Senate by a vote of 98–0 earlier this month, contains the framework for such a program for natural gas and oil pipelines. A parallel program exists within the Department of Energy for the electric transmission system, and I hope we will see a serious commitment to these programs in the budget that the President sends to Congress in the next week or so.

The oil and gas industry has made great strides in increasing productivity and bringing down exploration and production costs. Development of 3D and 4D seismic analysis techniques, horizontal drilling, and deep water production systems are some examples that have enabled the industry to continue producing more oil and gas from the mature fields on shore and to set world records in deep water development in the Gulf of Mexico. A robust R&D program to maximize recovery, to address problems of operations in ultra deep waters, and to evaluate the potential of methane hydrates will be critical to future development of affordable natural gas supplies.

I am concerned that the President maintain a serious commitment to funding critical energy research and development. We have shortchanged ourselves in the past by cutting investment in R&D to meet other budget objectives. We should not make that same mistake again this year.

On tax policy, the Finance Committee will soon begin hearings on the President's budget and tax proposals. These hearings will give the Senate an opportunity to evaluate a range of tax incentives to enhance investment and distribute a generation from combined heat and power systems and fuel cells to renewable technologies and energy-efficient property used in business. Many of these proposals are included in the bill that was introduced today by Senator MURKOWSKI. They have been included in legislation I have introduced and cosponsored in the past.

We need to carefully analyze the need for policy measures versus changes in tax policies as we go through this debate over the next few months. The omnibus Republican energy bill is very generous in its modification of the Tax Code as a solution to many shortfalls, perceived and otherwise, in our energy policy. For example, at a time when oil and gas prices are at such high levels, with the major oil companies reporting record earnings, I believe it is valid to say that the industry does not need additional tax incentives in order to go forward and explore and produce petroleum products. What we do need are well-thought-out, countercyclical measures that give producers incentives to maintain investment in domestic exploration and drilling during a time of extremely low prices as we had a year or two ago.

Top priority should be given to policies that correct market failures and meet major policy goals of increasing efficiency and diversifying technologies.

We need to develop long-term policies, and I have been speaking about some of those long-term policies. In the interim, individuals and families and small businesses are suffering today from energy bills that they cannot pay. President Bush, during his campaign, made clear his support for ensuring adequate funds for the LIHEAP program—that is Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—and for the low-income efficiency programs.

In addition to the stress on families and individuals, higher energy prices are having an impact on our economy as well. Every dollar spent on these programs will be immediately and completely reinjected into the economy, unlike tax cuts that will not have an impact for months into the future. I urge the President to send those in Congress a request for a supplemental appropriation with his budget for next year, a supplemental appropriation so we can adequately fund the LIHEAP program and adequately fund the weatherization programs that are so important for many in our country.

Our majority leader, earlier this afternoon, indicated we would not be addressing energy policy on the Senate floor until sometime this summer, June or July I believe was his estimate. That may be an appropriate time to address long-term energy policy because it will take several months to develop a good piece of legislation which we can support on a bipartisan basis. But that is too long to wait for attention to these immediate needs, the need to adequately fund the LIHEAP program and the weatherization programs.

We are not at a crossroads where one path or the other needs to be taken in our national energy policy. The supply side only path that some have advocated would be both futile and destructive. The path of maximum efficiency—renewable and emission-free energy—is a very long road with many milestones along the way. It would be foolhardy to put all of our confidence in that path, as well.

We need a commitment to parallel paths, with a focus on maintaining the core values of equity and affordability and environmental integrity. I believe we can do that if we get on with the consideration of the legislation I introduced the week before we had our recess to address our immediate needs for adequate funding of the programs that assist families to deal with the high cost of energy they are facing this winter. And then we need this bipartisan effort to develop some long-term policies.

I am confident with good will on both sides of the political aisle we can come up with a bipartisan piece of legislation that will move our country forward and help us deal with these very real problems. I commend all of my colleagues for their interest in these energy issues. I hope we can work together constructively to address them in the months ahead.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, we have been talking about energy today. I rise now to talk about this Nation's struggle to deal with a threatening energy situation that is affecting our economy.

I don't think there is any other issue that will come before Congress that will have more to do with our daily lives than this one.

For those of you who do not believe we are in a situation that makes us all very uncomfortable, I ask you to rethink that. The prevailing mind-set must change in order to solve this problem that has reached a crisis proportion.

Don't let anybody tell you differently. We are in the midst of one of the worst energy shortages this Nation has ever experienced. The oil shortage will pale to the one of the 1970s because it entails all forms of energy. I remember the long gas lines and forced reductions in heating energy that we faced in the 1970s. I also remember the financial pain that it placed on all Americans—especially Montanans. We come from a large State. We are very mobile. In fact, if you look at the size of Montana from the northwest corner to the southeast corner, it is farther than the distance from Chicago to Washington, DC.

All of us were hurt during those days. Families of farmers and ranchers, over-the-road truck drivers, manufacturing companies, loggers, and the mining industry were jolted by that energy shortage—jolted to the point where some did not recover at all.

When coupled with high interest rates at that time and runaway inflation, it was truly a double whammy. I do not want to see that happen again. But little did I know, although I should have, that our memories are very short on our understanding of energy and the role it plays in our everyday lives. We took it for granted too long, even though the signs of the impending dangers were there. It is still talked about in the Halls here, but the message fell on ears that did not want to listen.

In Montana, we have already seen the impact. Columbia Falls Aluminum Company, one of the largest users of electrical power, closed its doors for a year. Montana Resources in Butte, MT, closed its doors, and we don't know when that will ever be open. Many others will have to do the same if price signals on the cost of commodities or the cost of power does not change. I am told that farmers placing orders for their spring fertilizer needs are stunned when they hear the price. Any increase in the cost of production would be devastating to grain growers in Montana.

As you know, natural gas is used in the production of nitrogen for urea and fertilizer that is used across the country.

Facing this problem is something within itself. We are in the midst of a crisis. We must use caution. We cannot succumb to the knee-jerk reactions that are of a temporary nature. Usually, that leads to a long-term nightmare.

While I know the challenge that faces us, I plan to approach it with a great deal of caution.

First off, there are some folks who are promulgating the idea that we impose Federal price caps on electricity. That will not work in the Northwestern United States at this time. Price caps discourage investment, generation and transmission at a time when we need all three.

The National Energy Security Act of 2001 introduced by Senator MURKOWSKI today is a piece of legislation that is pretty well thought out and is supposed to stabilize energy prices as we see them today.

That is why I am adding my name as a cosponsor to that bill. But as with any bill, there are portions I would like to work on with Senator MURKOWSKI, the administration, and the Energy Committee when we begin the debate. But I am generally comfortable that the legislation is a positive move in the right direction for our country and American consumers.

The bill aims to protect the energy security of the United States and decrease America's dependency on foreign oil sources to less than 50 percent by the year 2010 by enhancing the use of renewable energy sources, conserving energy resources, improving energy efficiencies, and increasing domestic energy supplies. As written, it will improve environmental quality by reducing emissions of air pollutants, greenhouse gases, and it will, in effect, stunt the increased costs of energy to the American consumer.

But let's take a closer and intensive look at what I perceive are the reasons we are in this energy situation today. Electricity prices are skyrocketing. We are seeing high gasoline prices, oil prices, natural gas prices, and heating oil prices as well. In fact, the price per barrel of oil has gone from $15.99 in 1992 to well over $30 this year. Natural gas prices have gone from $1.74 per thousand cubic feet at the wellhead to nearly $5 per thousand cubic feet today. Electricity prices in the Northwest have gone from roughly $20 per megawatt hour in 1992 to nearly $250 per megawatt hour right now. I don't have a high enough math degree to figure how much of an increase that really is. Gasoline prices were around 93 cents per gallon in 1992 and now sit at nearly a $1.40 or $1.50 per gallon today. And these prices are before taxes are added. So prices have gone up across the board for all forms of energy.

The policies of the past 8 years, or as some would say the lack of a clear national energy policy, has contributed to this predicament we find ourselves in today.

In the Northwest, we have seen a 24 percent increase in electricity consumption since 1992, while generation has only increased 4 percent. If you add the California situation into the mix, the discrepancy grows even larger. Further, the Electric Power Research Institute recently found that there is going to be a 20 to 25 percent growth in electricity demand in the next 10 years, but, again, only a 4 percent increase in generation and also the transmission lines to carry that electricity, that power. The stats speak for themselves. If we do not see more generation and the ability to transmit it—if those do not come on-line—high energy prices are here to stay. We must lose the mentality that electricity comes from a switch like the mentality that milk comes from a jug.

Commonsense tells us that our regulation policies should allow the supply to meet the demand.

We can and must identify and reform or, in some cases, remove some of the regulatory burdens. We now have a mandate to assess and improve agency performance, which could lead to more timely processing of permits and applications to produce power.

Public lands in the West, what role do they play? Or should they play a role? They do have a role to play. They may hold the key to the dependency of foreign sources of oil and natural gas. We can and must improve the usage and management of our public lands, which means better coordination with local citizens affected by agency action. And there needs to be consistency within the agencies so that investors have some kind of idea about when they may see a return on their investment.

We have seen that oil and gas exploration increased with the previous administration. That is true. It is a true statement. It is also true that more lands were withdrawn from exploration than in any other administration. Exploration might have increased but, I would ask, did production?

Finally, we must reduce the time and cost for approving exploration and management of development projects. Our Federal agencies need to help ease the pain of regulatory burdens that have been placed on America's energy consumers.

Next, we need to be able to access those vast resources on our public lands. The Federal Government currently manages—now listen to this figure—650 million acres of land. More than 90 percent of this land is west of the Mississippi River. In fact, 52 percent of the land in the West is managed by Federal and State Governments. In Montana, nearly 50 percent of our land is owned by the Federal Government. Folks, 95 percent of the undiscovered oil and 40 percent of the undiscovered gas is estimated to be located under these public lands. It is obvious to me that herein lies a part of our solution to energy dependence on foreign sources. We have the ways and means to manage our natural resources on public lands so that the environment is treated like we would treat our own homes.

I am confident that the new administration, working with Energy Committee Chairman FRANK MURKOWSKI and the rest of the Congress, will develop a comprehensive plan that will take the step to solve the problems that we are facing. As I stated before, we must looks at our regulations and regulatory burdens. We must be able to site generation facilities in a timely manner. We, as policymakers and acting in the best interests of all Americans, should be able to site transmission lines in a timely manner.

Finally, we must remove the barriers that stifle incentives for investment in our power markets, while at the same

time providing incentives to do the same. We have worked ourselves out of crisis situations in the past. American ingenuity and imagination will again, in a free market, take its role and provide us again with affordable energy, but it must be allowed to do so. It must be allowed in our shared American values.

REMEMBERING DALE EARNHARDT

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I rise to speak today about Dale Earnhardt. During this past week, millions of racing fans all around the country have been mourning the death of this stock car great. He was killed on the last turn of the last lap of the prestigious Daytona 500 just a week ago Sunday.

I rise today not only to eulogize Dale Earnhardt but to try to explain to those who are not racing fans why his life and death means so much to those of us who are. I believe there are some lessons of life here that have relevance to all of us and, indeed, to the health of our country.

Why is Dale Earnhardt's death an occasion for such reflection? The first reason has to do with the man himself. I did not know him well. His closest friends talked not just about Dale Earnhardt the race car driver but about Dale Earnhardt the man, a family man, a man who was intensely loyal to his friends, a man who went out of his way to do thoughtful favors, who took great care of his employees, and who helped younger drivers.

Ironically, he died at almost the precise moment that Michael Waltrip took the checkered flag at the Daytona 500 race. It was Waltrip's first victory ever in a very long racing career, well over 400 starts. Dale Earnhardt believed in Michael Waltrip. He believed he could win if he had the right equipment. So he hired him; he provided him a car that could win, and Michael Waltrip did the rest.

In private, Earnhardt always seemed to me to be quiet; in fact, even shy. But on the track he was anything but shy. He was known as ''the Intimidator.'' That is precisely because of the way he raced. He was tough. It seemed he would always find a way to win, even if his car was not as good that day as some of the others.

Sometimes, especially earlier in his career, he was perhaps too aggressive. But he didn't see racing as a sport for the weak. Indeed, I don't think there is anything wrong with having a very strong desire to be the very best you can be. That seemed to be Dale Earnhardt's motivation in life. As racing fans, as sports fans of any kind, we all have our favorites, but no real NASCAR fan would deny that he was the greatest driver of his time.

It takes away nothing from the other great drivers to acknowledge that Dale Earnhardt was the best. He had enormous natural talent and courage. It takes courage to drive a car right on the edge, at 200 miles per hour. He had experience, racing smarts, and he had an intangible will—the will to win. He won seven NASCAR championships, tied only by Richard Petty. He had a lot of other racing victories as well. One of the racing series is called IROC, International Race of Champions, where everybody is given an identical car and it is up to the drivers to show who is the best using identically prepared cars. Earnhardt frequently won because of his skill.

It may simply be a sport, but we can all appreciate excellence. Whether in art, music, business, or sport, it is a joy to watch the very best perform. That is one of the reasons Dale Earnhardt will be so sorely missed. His peers will miss him as well as his fans.

Why was he so tough? It had to do with respect. One of the highest accomplishments for a race car driver was to have the respect of Dale Earnhardt. In NASCAR racing, you knew you had made it when Dale Earnhardt said so.

Some wonder how well NASCAR will fare with the death of its greatest driver. But Dale Earnhardt would scoff at that thought. It was always his dream to drive a NASCAR. NASCAR was a great sports organization before he got there, and it will continue to grow. It is the Nation's fastest-growing sport. Just as Richard Petty's 200 wins and 7 championships earned him the moniker ''The King,'' NASCAR will add Dale Earnhardt to its great history and tradition, and it will continue.

Back to the original question: Why do so many millions of Americans mourn his death? I think it has to do with the very nature of NASCAR itself. It is a family affair, and all NASCAR fans consider themselves part of that family. You start with NASCAR itself, the National Association of Stock Car Racing, which was started by Bill France, from Daytona Beach, FL. His family took it over. His son Bill France, Jr., has been the head of NASCAR during its great growth period.

I pray for Bill France, Jr.'s health. He has, in effect, turned most of the business over to other members of his family now and also to the CEO of NASCAR, Mike Helton. The crews, the owners, the sponsors, the drivers, the owners of the tracks, and the media that cover the sport are all a very close-knit unit. They race hard against each other, but they will always come to each other's aid in times of difficulty.

Not only is there a strong sense of values within the people who participate in the sport, but also strong values within the family, starting with a firm belief in God. When the race is over, ordinarily when the driver maneuvers himself out of the car and claims victory, first of all he will thank God for a safe race and for the talent, he will thank his crew for preparing the car, and he will thank a lot of other people for enabling him to win. At the races, each Sunday morning before the race starts there is a chapel service and a prayer before the race.

A lot of these things don't characterize typical sports events. These are good people. They are not prima donnas like some other sports figures. They provide interviews and give autographs and do appearances. They appeal to young people. They are really normal people doing very extraordinary things. Fans can relate to them. They look at them not as role models but as people who, in a sense, are like them. Many came up the hard way, as Earnhardt did. He didn't even graduate from high school. His father was a great driver in his own right. Now Dale Earnhardt's son, Dale Jr., will have to do the same.

In the end, Dale Earnhardt is mourned because his life is an example of the American dream. He came from very humble beginnings—in his case, from the small town of Kannapolis, NC—worked hard, and ended up a success. Dale Earnhardt is mourned because he embodied the qualities not only personifying NASCAR but, in a sense, life in general, and humility, loyalty, caring, hard work, pride in one's work, and the competitive spirit. Most of all, he was a lover of family and friends.

Today, I join the millions of Americans who are praying for Dale's wife Theresa, his children, and all of the good people who are fans of NASCAR.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. President, I rise today to note with sadness the tragic death of Dale Earnhardt.

For the past week, the Nation has mourned the loss of a racing legend.

But in my home State of North Carolina, his death has a special significance because we have lost a cherished native son.

Dale Earnhardt was a hero to countless NASCAR fans in North Carolina and across our country.

His success on the track helped elevate stock-car racing from a regional pastime to a national sport.

Racing brought Dale fame and wealth, but he never forgot his roots in Kannapolis, North Carolina or the hometown fans who backed him from the beginning.

He never let them down. They always knew they could count on Dale to give it his all every time.

Dale Earnhardt was a champion from the start, winning NASCAR rookie-of-the-year honors back in 1975.

In 26 years of racing, Dale won 7 Winston Cup Series titles, 76 races in all, including the 1998 Daytona 500, and became the leading all-time money winner in racing history.

His fans and his fellow racers called him ''The Intimidator''—not just because he won so many races—but because he was a fierce competitor.

Dale Earnhardt was more than a great race car driver. He was also a great American success story, rising from poverty and a ninth-grade education to become a racing legend and extraordinarily successful businessman.

He was also a great husband to his wife Teresa, and a great father to his